The CPD has been charged with conducting an extensive and comprehensive public input process regarding Colorado State University's proposal to consider building an on-campus stadium. This document was developed to explain the role of the Center for Public Deliberation as it pertains to the on-campus stadium process.

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Background of the Center for Public Deliberation
The Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) is dedicated to improving the quality of public communication and community problem-solving.

Martín Carcasson, Ph.D., serves as the director of the CPD, which he founded in the fall of 2006. He is also adjunct faculty with the University of Denver’s Conflict Resolution program and is a senior engagement fellow with Public Agenda (www.publicagenda.org). Leah Sprain, Ph.D., was hired in the fall of 2009 and serves as the associate director. Both are faculty in the Department of Communication Studies. The CPD is part of the National Issues Forum network (www.nifi.org) as well as the University Network for Collaborative Governance (www.policyconsensus.org/uncg/).

As part of the CPD student associate program, CSU students, primarily undergraduates selected through an application process, spend at least a year being trained as impartial facilitators and assist in designing, facilitating, and reporting on various public events throughout the year. Information on past projects is available at the CPD website at cpd.colostate.edu. Community members also have an opportunity to be trained and work alongside the students.

The Theory Behind the CPD
Dr. Carcasson created the CPD to serve as an impartial resource to the northern Colorado community. Before the CPD, his research focused on how we talk about difficult political issues and the importance of high quality communication for democracy to function as it should. By high quality communication, we mean communication that is informed by data, respectful of opposing views, considerate of the broad range of potential consequences to actions, and mindful of broad values and the inherent need to
balance multiple values in democratic decision-making. He began the CPD because he found that the two dominant forms of political communication—which he terms “adversarial” and “expert” politics—are often ill-equipped to help communities address difficult problems. Indeed, they often make the problems more difficult to solve because they incentivize poor communication tactics that lead to mutual misunderstanding, polarization, cynicism, and simplified opinions concerning issues. Dr. Carcasson hoped that the CPD would increase the capacity for what is termed “deliberative politics,” an alternative that focuses on giving community members opportunities to interact with each other in more safe and productive environments. The CPD supports deliberative practice by providing balanced background material concerning an issue, establishing ground rules to create a productive discussion, and utilizing trained facilitators to help small groups work through difficult issues.

Deliberative practice has proven to be particularly important to address problems that have no clear technical solution, but rather involve competing, underlying values that are in tension with each other. Any attempted solution to such problems will thus support some values but go against others. In a diverse democracy, such problems are prevalent, and have earned the term “wicked problems.” Adversarial politics—politics that focuses on two competing positions that focus on mobilizing support for their point of view and against the other—do not handle wicked problems well because they often frame issues as if no tradeoffs are necessary. They narrow the view to the values they support and imply that the opposing view either rejects those values or holds negative values. Such tactics are common in adversarial politics and make it more difficult to understand and address a problem. Expert politics—politics focused on relying on experts to utilize data to solve problems—also tends to fall short concerning wicked problems. Good data is certainly critical to community problem-solving, but because wicked problems involve competing underlying values, data can only get us so far. Experts can provide vital information to inform any decision-making process, but value-laden decisions can rarely be solved through research alone. The difficult process of finding the right balance between competing values, or discovering innovative means to transcend the tensions typically goes beyond the technical.

Deliberative politics therefore seeks to provide citizens with the opportunity to take on wicked problems directly. Deliberative processes attempt to highlight the tensions caused by key underlying values as well as provide the necessary facts and data to inform decision-making. They then provide participants with opportunities to engage the issues with others in order to work through the tensions and consider all the consequences to various proposals and how they impact important values both positively and negatively. The goal of deliberative practice is to help participants refine their individual opinions through quality conversation, while also developing a clear sense of the public judgment about difficult issues.

To accomplish this work, the CPD performs several tasks. The graphic to the right identifies the four primary tasks of the CPD as deliberative issue analysis, convening, facilitating interactive communication, and reporting. Deliberative issue analysis involves researching issues from an impartial perspective, focusing on the arguments being offered from various perspectives, the values underlying the positions, key fact issues that seem to arise, and barriers to quality decision making that are evident, such as
misinformation, wishful thinking, or misrepresentation of opposing motives. From that analysis, we develop processes that help relevant stakeholder engage the issue in more productive ways. **Convening** involves bringing participants together to discuss the issue. With certain issues, the difficult work of attracting a diverse and representative audience is critical to insure quality deliberation. Depending on the issue, at times it is important to bring specific audiences together, such as groups of experts or voices that are not typically heard. **Facilitating interactive communication** represents the critical stage of actually having participants interact with each other. “Interactive communication” perhaps sounds repetitive, but in reality much of our political communication is one-way (i.e. letters to the editor, message board posts that talk past each other, competing web pages and talking points that rarely take opposing views seriously, etc.). Providing opportunities for opposing views, as well as individuals in between, to talk and listen to each other is critical to deliberative practice. This is one of the main reasons CPD forums are typically held in small groups around round tables, and the larger “one at a time at the microphone” style is avoided. Because it is difficult to talk with people you disagree with and it isn’t necessarily natural to consider the underlying values to tough issues, these discussions often require facilitation. What that means is that the process is designed beforehand to accomplish particular engagement goals, and trained facilitators are utilized to help guide the process and help the small group work through the process. The final task, **reporting**, involves the analysis of the data captured during the facilitated discussions. Information is captured in a number of ways, including but not limited to table notes, worksheets and surveys completed by participants, wireless keypad surveys. That information is then utilized to better understand the issue, and feeds back into deliberative issue analysis. Deliberative analysts in particular focus on:

a. identification and clarification of the key arguments made concerning various proposals  
b. identification of common ground that developed and what key values surfaced  
c. identification of key tensions and differences that arise or persist  
d. identification of key fact questions and data needs that arise  
e. identification and attempted resolution of key barriers to good conversation and decision-making, such as misinformation, distrust, or misrepresentation of motives

The identification of these “key products” of deliberation in turn allow the deliberative practitioners to better understand the issue and either design the next cycle in a manner that moves the conversation forward or support the move to action. Action in this case may involve institutional decision-makers making a decision or broader groups moving to action in any number of ways.

An important term used by the CPD to explain their role is “passionate impartiality.” Dr. Carcasson coined the term to signify the difficult balance that the CPD must often play. The CPD serves as an impartial resource, but at the same time is passionate about its goals of improving our community, improving how democracy functions, and enhancing the quality of public discourse. At times, therefore, the goals of supporting democracy and improved communication are in tension with a neutral, detached impartiality. For example, in developing background material, the CPD will err on the side of providing voice to those who normally are not heard, as well as providing focus on views with stronger evidence and data to support their points of view. Said differently, neutrality in the face of the abuse of power or in the face of misrepresentation and deception would violate our commitment to democracy and improved communication. CPD materials, facilitation style, and reporting will thus intervene when appropriate to insure full discussion of issues and respect for quality information. CPD facilitators, for example, may play “devil’s advocate” in order to help small groups consider opposing views if those views are not being adequately represented.
The CPD Role in the CSU On-Campus Stadium Proposal
The CPD agreed to assist with the CSU on-campus stadium issue because it represents an issue that needs improved communication. The debate concerning the stadium quickly polarized, with both opponents and proponents at times offering simplified views of the issue and making disparaging remarks concerning those holding opposing views. Significant concerns about the process have also been expressed, which if not properly addressed can increase the level of animosity concerning the issue. CSU President Tony Frank contacted the CPD on January 20th to request their assistance with the public engagement on the issue, and the CPD agreed to run a series of public forums to help the community discuss the proposal and to ultimately provide the Stadium Advisory Committee with a report on that public engagement process.

The CPD began its work by simply immersing itself in the public comments that had already been expressed concerning the issue. At the preliminary meeting of the Stadium Advisory Committee on February 3rd, public input forms were distributed to those attending the meeting, and that form was also made available online. That data, as well as data continuously gathered from emails, articles, letters to the editor, and various message boards and websites, is being utilized by CPD staff and students to design interactive meetings to allow participants to discuss the proposed stadium and provide input on key issues in a respectful and productive manner. On Monday, February 20th, the initial schedule of meetings was released, and more information on the schedule is available online at cpd.colostate.edu. The CPD goal with this process is to not only insure that everyone gets heard, but that interested individuals, whether they are for, against, or undecided about the proposal, get a chance to work through this topic and interact with fellow community members about the numerous issues connected to the stadium. Difficult issues like these call for high quality communication and engagement, and the CPD will be focused on providing such opportunities.

The CPD will work as an independent entity during the process. All raw data collected from the sessions—such as survey forms, notes from the discussions, and wireless keypad data—will be posted on the CPD website. That data will then be organized and analyzed for presentation to the Stadium Advisory Committee, with those reports also made public. The CPD fully realizes that serving as an “impartial” resource is a difficult endeavor, and to serve that function transparency, trust, and impartiality are critical. We will be careful to continue to build our reputation for serving as a passionately impartial resource here in Northern Colorado.

The Stadium Public Forum Process
The initial set of public forums concerning the stadium proposal will all follow a common format. Since we will be utilizing small group discussions, strict RSVPs will be necessary to insure that we have enough facilitators to run the process. The number of participants will be set by the number of facilitators available or the number of tables that fit in each room. RSVPs will be closed for a session once it reaches its capacity. Overall, we anticipate being able to handle over 1,000 participants across the forums, and may add more forums if demand continues. Interested parties can RSVP at http://col.st/zdOW3k (preferred), or by calling the CSU Communication Studies department (which houses the CPD) at 970-491-6140.
Either Dr. Carcasson or Dr. Sprain will begin each forum by reviewing the overall stadium process, explaining the goals of the forums, walking through the process, and establishing ground rules. Wireless keypad technology will then be used to capture the demographics of who is in the room, particularly in terms of the mix of key stakeholders (community, faculty, staff, alumni, and students). An initial values exercise will help situate the conversation and begin the work of establishing common ground while also recognizing key differences of opinion that may exist across perspectives.

The process will then move to the small group discussion tables, where the CPD student and community associates will allow participants a chance to introduce themselves, state their opinion, and respond to the values exercise. Later, Dr. Carcasson or Dr. Sprain will explain the next step in the process and introduce the background materials. The conversation at the small tables will then focus on reacting to the stadium proposal and discussing the pros and cons highlighted on the background materials developed by the CPD through their analysis of past public input. Participants will react to the documents, discussing which of the arguments resonate with them in particular and why, as well as offer changes or additions to the document. Facilitators will work to insure all participants are involved in the discussion and to support interaction throughout. Said differently, rather than simply being a collection of individual opinions concerning the proposal, the small group discussions are designed to allow participants to react to each other, move past simple assumptions, and ultimately sharpen their views concerning the issue. After the discussion, participants will be asked to answer questions on worksheets so that key insights from the discussions can be captured to post online and to inform the report.

Goals for the CPD Stadium Forums

Multiple goals inform the design of the CPD stadium forums. To begin with, we hope they will provide participants both an opportunity to express their views and be heard, as well as a chance to learn more about the issue from fellow participants. The primary goal, however, will be to capture a better sense of the public voice on this issue and bring clarity to the arguments for and against the stadium. The data from the forums will be compiled and then analyzed for presentation to the Stadium Advisory Committee. That report will likely focus on the key products of deliberation as explained above (points a – e on the top of page 3). The bottom line is that we hope to provide the committee with a clear map of the issue that summarizes the views of relevant stakeholder groups. The data will also identify key areas for additional research and data collection as the process continues.

Another important potential outcome of the deliberative forums are innovative ideas about how to best negotiate the tensions and underlying values relevant to the discussion (whether or not the proposal moves forward). A weakness of adversarial communication is that much of its energy is often used on strategic framings that may be persuasive, but nonetheless cause misunderstanding and polarization because they do not take opposing views seriously enough. Deliberative discussions, on the other hand, help identify key tensions and allow participants to focus on addressing those tensions, making it more likely that innovative means to balancing or transcending those tensions can be discovered.
Another important indirect goal for all CPD events is to increase the capacity in the community to have difficult conversations and work together more productively to solve tough issues. Indeed, one of the primary reasons the CPD agreed to take on the public engagement on the stadium is the opportunity to show the community that robust, civil discourse is not only possible, but it often critical to communities. We hope above all that our forums show Fort Collins and CSU at its best.

**How are Deliberative Forums Different than Other Forms of Public Input?**

Deliberative forums certainly take much more time and effort to run than typical public hearings or opinion polls, though quality polls can be very expensive. Each form of gathering public input has its strengths and weaknesses, and each has their place. The CPD obviously feels deliberative forums are very valuable and underutilized because many of the reasons already reviewed in this document. They provide opportunities for interaction across perspectives, help communities work through tough issues, incentivize higher quality communication rather than the opposite, create mutual understanding, and help identify steps for moving forward. That being said, deliberation requires small groups and trained facilitators, which are important and resource-heavy limitations. Deliberative forums are also not necessarily representative, unless funds are available to gather a random sample to deliberate. These stadium forums, for example, will likely attract supporters and opponents of the proposal, while individuals in the middle may not be as likely to attend. As a result, results from these forums should not be interpreted as necessarily representative of the public voice. Efforts will be made to invite diversity of perspective to the forums, but the “perfectly representative” room is an ideal that will never be achieved.

Public opinion polls do bring the advantage of more representativeness if done well, but lose the benefits of allowing people a chance to talk through the issue and inform themselves. Public opinion polls report a surface opinion, which may or may not be thought through to any extent. They can be a useful data point to get a sense of overall positions, but provide little in terms of why those positions are held.

Public hearings, which allow participants a chance to speak briefly at a microphone to a group of institutional decision-makers, perhaps represent the most common form of face-to-face public input. They do allow people to express themselves, but only one person speaks at a time, and the degree to which anyone is really listening is questionable. Interaction is at a minimum, so it typically involves a collection of individual opinions, rather than a discussion or even a debate. Public hearings can be important as a release valve for the public, may be important symbolically, and help people get a sense of key issues, but rarely represent high quality communication.

Other forms of input such as letters to the editor, online forms, and message boards are often similar to public hearings in that they encourage one-way communication and the expression of opinion, but not necessarily interaction or learning.
Timeline for Forums
The initial schedule of forums are:

- Thursday February 23 from 4:15-6:15 pm in the Cherokee Room in the Lory Student Center
- Thursday February 23 from 7-9 pm in the Cherokee Room in the Lory Student Center
- Monday February 27 from 4:15-6:15 pm in the Cherokee Room in the Lory Student Center
- Monday February 27 from 7-9 pm in the Cherokee Room in the Lory Student Center
- Saturday March 3 from 9-11 am in the West Ballroom in the Lory Student Center
- Saturday March 3 from 12-2 pm in the West Ballroom in the Lory Student Center
- Tuesday March 6 from 4:15-6:15 pm in the West Ballroom in the Lory Student Center
- Tuesday March 6 from 7-9 pm in the West Ballroom in the Lory Student Center
- Wednesday March 7 from 4:15-6:15 pm at the Drake Centre on 802 West Drake Road
- Wednesday March 7 from 7-9 pm at the Drake Centre on 802 West Drake Road

Additional forums may be added to either meet demand or to work more specifically with stakeholders that have been underrepresented. On March 29, the CPD will present a summary report at the 2nd meeting of the Stadium Advisory Board. After that meeting, there will also be a more traditional public hearing style meeting that will provide the opportunity for interested parties to comment directly to President Frank, Athletic Director Jack Graham, and members of the advisory committee.

For Additional Information on the CPD
Visit the CPD website, where articles written by Dr. Carcasson and Dr. Sprain are posted, as well as annual reports. Links to many of those articles are also available below.

CPD Director Martin Carcasson has published three different articles discussing the work of the CPD and the role of universities in providing local capacity for deliberative democracy and collaborative problem-solving:

1. "Facilitating Democracy through Passionate Impartiality: Communication Studies Programs and Students Should Serve as Local Resources," published in Spectra,

2. "Facilitating Community Democracy from Campus: Centers, Faculty, and Students as Key Resources of Passionate Impartiality," in Higher Education Review

3. "Facilitating Democracy: Centers and Institutes of Public Deliberation and Collaborative Problem-Solving," in New Directions in Higher Education

Public Sector Digest published an article by CPD director Carcasson and associate director Leah Sprain on the Key Aspects of Deliberative Democracy

The Center for Advances in Public Engagement has published a research report authored by CPD director Martin Carcasson entitled, Beginning with the End in Mind: A Call for Goal-Driven Deliberative Practice. The report is available free online through Public Agenda.
Useful Deliberation Links

The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (www.ncdd.org) NCCD is a primary umbrella group organization that has information on hundreds of deliberative organizations and techniques. Their “resources” link on the top menu leads you to a very information packed search screen.

The National Issues Forum is one of the oldest and most respected deliberative organizations. They produce 3-4 national issue books each year, and host numerous trainings. Local NIF “Public Policy Institutes” also produce local issue books that may be useful. A few of the national books are available online as PDFs (others can be ordered), while most of the local books are free online. Main website: www.nifi.org The direct link to the list of local issue books is located at: http://www.nifi.org/discussion_guides/guides.aspx?catID=15

Kettering Foundation – The Kettering Foundation is a research foundation dedicated to asking the question “what will it take to make democracy work as it should.” They support research on a broad number of topics related to democracy and serve as a convener bringing together national and international scholars and practitioners working on democratic issue.

Public Agenda – Wonderful resource with a number of NIF style issue books available. They also sponsor the Center for the Advancement of Public Engagement (CAPE), which has several useful free publications. www.publicagenda.org.

Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center) www.everyday-democracy.org

Like NIF, Study Circles is a well respected national organization known for its high quality issue books and tested deliberative methods. Their books are also available free online (topics such as racism, diversity, poverty, and public education). They also maintain a “Issue Book Exchange” that provides book on a number of topics.

AmericaSpeaks www.americaspeaks.org A national organization that focused on large scale democratic gathering that utilize technology to bring thousands together to deliberate. Many of their reports are available online.

Public Conversation’s Project http://www.publicconversations.org. The Public Conversations Project (PCP) guides, trains, and inspires individuals, organizations, and communities to constructively address conflicts relating to values and worldviews.